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C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 001196

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/13/2014

TAGS: PGOV PREL PINR DJ

SUBJECT: DJIBOUTIAN OPPOSITION LEADER DIES

Classified By: Pol/Econ Erinn C. Reed for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) President of the Djiboutian opposition party Republican Alliance for Democracy (ARD), Ahmed Dini Ahmed, died during the morning of 12 September 2004 at Peltier Hospital. Dini had been suffering from lung cancer, which progressed into metastasis. President Ismail Omar Guelleh reportedly visited Dini at the hospital last week and offered medical evacuation to France. Dini reportedly refused the offer and chose to die in Djibouti.

¶2. (U) President Guelleh sent a message of condolence to Dini's family, stating that "the Almighty had recalled our brother and fellow citizen." He continued that "on behalf of the nation and myself personally, I am eager to express to the family of Ahmed Dini our deepest condolences." Guelleh described Dini as a combatant for freedom, and a statesman of great qualities who has always known hot to fight for his faith and his opinions. La Nation, the local Djiboutian government daily, carried a front page article on what it described as the "disappearance" of a great figure in national politics.

¶3. (U) BIO: Ahmed Dini Ahmed, 70 years old, has been a prominent and important figure in Djiboutian politics since the days of colonial administration by France. Born in the northern district of Obock in 1932, Dini began his political activity early and was very active in the labor unions. He became a deputy in the Assemblee Territoriale de la Cote Francaise (Territorial Parliament) in 1959 and served twice as Minister in the territorial government. Dini then turned his efforts towards independence for the country and with Hassan Gouled Aptidon, became one of the most ferocious opponents of the territorial government from 1967 to 1977. When Hassan Gouled Aptidon came to power at independence, Dini joined him as Prime Minister. Approximately one year after independence, Dini went into voluntary exile after a disagreement with Aptidon. In 1991, Dini rejoined the Djiboutian opposition, rising quickly to the top of the FRUD party. Dini was at the head of the radical wing of the FRUD party during the civil war, and refused to sign the 1994 peace agreements. However, he did sign the final peace accord in 2001. When the restrictions on how many political parties could exist ended, Dini created the opposition party Alliance Republicaine pour la Democratie (ARD Republican Alliance for Democracy), which has been the pillar at the center of the opposition coalition Union pour l'Alternance Democratique (UAD Union for Democratic Alternance).

¶4. (C) Comment: Pol Asst reported that the sentiment around town during the evening of 12 September was fearful. The number of police checkpoints throughout the city was notably increased. (Note: RSO's information indicates that this was most likely precautionary against public suspicion of foul play. End Note.) Dini was buried just outside of Djibouti City at 9pm on 12 September. The burial was attended by many Government officials and a huge number of his family, as well as the Sultan of Tadjourah and the traditional leaders of Tadjourah.

¶5. (C) Dini's death will have a significant impact on the Djiboutian political scene, most especially the political face of the opposition. Dini was an integral part of Djiboutian politics for more than 50 years. Dini was also known as one of the strongest personalities in the opposition. The succession to Dini's position is likely to be a struggle between those that see themselves as legitimate successors, his family and sons, and those that claim to have been Dini's companion during his twenty years of exile. The reaction and attitude of the other three opposition parties is a factor that also remains uncertain. End Comment.
RAGSDALE